



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Terence R. McAuliffe
Governor

February 19, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Through: Regional Administrator MaryAnn Tierney
FEMA Region III
615 Chestnut Street
One Independence Mall, 6th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, and in accordance with the authority of *Code of Virginia* § 44-146.17(8), I request that you declare a major disaster for the Commonwealth of Virginia as a result of a severe winter storm/snow event that affected the Commonwealth and brought snow and ice to many areas of the state during the period beginning on January 22, 2016, and ending on January 24, 2016. This severe winter storm/snow event produced historic snowfalls in Virginia, with substantial snow and ice accumulation, as well as high winds and gusts creating blizzard-like conditions across much of the Commonwealth.

These severe weather conditions generated significant transportation issues involving numerous accidents and disabled and stranded vehicles that caused the closure of portions of the Commonwealth's major transportation corridors, including I-64 and I-81. The transportation infrastructure in Virginia was severely impaired throughout Central and Northern Virginia and the National Capital Region. The winter storm/snow event caused significant flight delays and cancellations at Ronald Reagan-Washington National Airport, Washington Dulles International Airport, Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport, Richmond International Airport, and Norfolk International Airport. The storm also caused the complete closures of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Metrorail system and Virginia Railway Express in Northern Virginia, and the suspension of Amtrak services within the state on January 22 and January 23, 2016.

Basic access along the Commonwealth's transportation system had to be maintained to ensure the capability to provide essential emergency services and resource support to required areas. Snow removal assets at the local and state levels were dedicated to maintaining access along interstates, primary roads, and the collector components of the secondary highway system.

The extreme weather conditions resulted in the opening of shelters and state and local resources were needed to address life safety issues. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner reported a total of 11 deaths due to this severe winter storm/snow event. More than 26 structures were reported as damaged or collapsed across the state because of the weight of snow and ice, including: historic Donk's Theater in Mathews County; an assisted living facility in Fairfax County; and an airport equipment building in Culpeper County.

In response to the situation, I took appropriate action under state law and directed the execution of the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan at 8:11 a.m. on January 21, 2016, and declared a State of Emergency to exist throughout the Commonwealth. This declaration is still in effect.

Continuous state assistance, support, and monitoring of the situation were required throughout this period. The damaging effects of the storm began impacting the state on January 22, 2016, and ended on January 24, 2016. While damages continue to be identified, this storm can be characterized as a two-day event. Based on Virginia's analysis using historic weather snowfall records provided by the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) and current snowfall data provided by NCDC, as well as the National Weather Service, 17 localities experienced a record or near-record snowfall in the context of the data provided for a two-day storm. Twenty-two localities met the snow threshold and have estimated public assistance costs that meet or exceed the *per capita* cost threshold required for a major disaster declaration. In addition, several localities have snowfall data under review by FEMA Region III and have submitted a preliminary damage assessment for review.

In addition, 59 localities declared a local state of emergency including the counties of: Accomack, Albemarle, Alleghany, Appomattox, Arlington, Augusta, Botetourt, Buchanan, Buckingham, Charlotte, Chesterfield, Clarke, Culpeper, Cumberland, Fairfax, Fauquier, Fluvanna, Frederick, Goochland, Greene, Halifax, Henry, Highland, King and Queen, King George, King William, Loudoun, Louisa, Madison, Northumberland, Orange, Page, Pittsylvania, Prince Edward, Prince George, Prince William, Pulaski, Rappahannock, Rockbridge, Shenandoah, Smyth, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Warren, and Westmoreland; the independent cities of Alexandria, Charlottesville, Falls Church, Fredericksburg, Lexington, Lynchburg, Manassas

Park, Martinsville, Roanoke, Staunton, Waynesboro, and Winchester; and the towns of Chincoteague and Farmville.

The following information is furnished on the nature and amount of state and local resources that have been used to alleviate the conditions of this disaster:

1. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) began coordinating with the National Weather Service, local jurisdictions, and members of the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST) on January 19, 2016. Emergency support functions were fully activated on January 21, 2016, followed immediately by the State of Emergency declaration. The VEST continued to monitor the storm, coordinate with localities and state agencies projected to be impacted by the storm, disseminate the necessary public information and respond to media inquiries, pre-stage and mobilize resources to effectively respond to local and regional requests for assistance, and respond to requests for assistance as required. The state coordinator of emergency management also issued a waiver for exemption of hours worked for carriers transporting motor fuels, home heating fuels, and road treatment chemicals for the period beginning January 21, 2016, for 30 days or until the crisis abates. The VEST arranged for the following resource support and services to assist with: assessment of water main breaks, transportation of critical patients in need of life-saving measures, flooding in lift stations in Tidewater, assessment of collapsed structures, and electrical generator support, such as the one provided to the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.
2. The Virginia Department of Transportation, in coordination with the Virginia State Police, implemented a number of protective actions to include debris removal, snow clearance/removal, and sanding, anti-icing, and de-icing activities to maintain safe road conditions and functionality of the overall road network and accessibility to critical facilities, as well as supported life safety responses to the numerous traffic incidents and road closures. A review of the transportation impacts revealed 662 interstate, primary, and secondary road segments were impacted. The Scotland-Jamestown Ferry was also closed on January 22, 2016.
3. The Virginia National Guard was activated to support anticipated requests for assistance. A total of 537 personnel were deployed statewide in response to this severe winter storm/snow event. Throughout the course of the event, Virginia National Guard conducted numerous missions to directly support other state agencies and local first responders with critical life-saving activities.

4. The Virginia State Police responded to 13,994 calls for service, including 1,859 accidents and 3,153 disabled vehicles, and supported other law enforcement needs during the event; this activity level far exceeded normal operating parameters.
5. The Virginia Department of Forestry responded to 30 winter storm/snow event missions by deploying incident management teams, chainsaw crews, personnel, and equipment to clear roads of fallen trees and snow for access by emergency support response and recovery operations.
6. Jointly, the Virginia Department of Social Services, the Virginia Department of Health, and localities opened six shelters throughout the Commonwealth, along with two homeless shelter facilities. During the storm, an assisted living facility in Fairfax County partially collapsed, requiring emergency shelter-in-place plans to be activated. Southwest and northern regions experienced water disruptions necessitating water safety monitoring.
7. A total of 112 school districts reported closings, with the majority closed from January 22 through January 27, 2016, emphasizing the duration of the impact well beyond the end of the severe winter storm/snow event.
8. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner confirmed 11 storm-related deaths.
9. Through the pre-positioning of equipment, Virginia's power providers worked during the severe winter storm/snow event to ensure that power restoration was managed as outages occurred. As a result, the peak power outage reported was 9,312. However, generators had to be provided to several localities and Verizon reported five sites that were operating on generators.
10. Members of Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) were requested to assist during the severe winter storm/snow event, including Christ In Action and Volunteer Prince William. Christ In Action received and fulfilled 64 requests for assistance, using 17 volunteers who put in more than 200 hours over five days. They traveled 1,500 miles in Christ In Action vehicles and worked in a 700-square-mile response area in Loudoun, Prince William, and Fauquier counties. Volunteer Prince William transported 12 dialysis patients and one chemotherapy patient. In addition, both organizations collaborated to shovel snow for 24 seniors with healthcare needs.

To date, Virginia's recognized Indian tribal governments coordinate both disaster response and recovery efforts through the locality in which the tribe resides. The Pamunkey Indian Tribe

received federal recognition on January 28, 2016, and the process of working with the tribe to establish their governance structure for emergency management has just begun. As such, the Pamunkey Indian Tribe should expect to be provided support for plans, training and exercises and other services as accorded all eligible entities within the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth of Virginia has a FEMA-approved and current state mitigation plan. All actions and activities associated with mitigation are in accordance with specific state goals, objectives, and strategies. Further, all storm-impacted local governments have FEMA-approved mitigation plans in accordance with the state plan.

Immediately after the abatement of the severe winter storm/snow event, VDEM began the review and evaluation of Initial Damage Assessments received from affected localities and state agencies. Historic snow totals provided by the NCDC, as well as current snow totals associated with this event and provided by the NCDC and the National Weather Service, were evaluated in calculating impacts in accordance with FEMA's Snow Assistance Policy. The required Public Assistance (PA) thresholds and cost data and associated documentation submitted by localities, state agencies, and other eligible applicants were provided to FEMA Region III for review, which served as a partial joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA).

Joint PDA began on February 8, 2016, and continued through February 18, 2016. Given the amount of details to review for each locality, the decision was made to jointly deploy staff in Northern Virginia and Richmond. While the review of the PDA information submitted was originally electronic, localities were able to talk with the reviewers and, in the case of Northern Virginia, have a face-to-face meeting to review their PDA submissions, as well as opportunities for more than 20 site visits to areas reported to have physical damage. Communication flowed well throughout this process, although not having the full data available for validation quickly after a disaster continues to be a challenge.

I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response exceeded the capabilities of the state and affected local governments, specifically in regard to emergency work and public infrastructure, and that supplementary federal assistance is needed. In addition, I am requesting hazard mitigation funding statewide.

The affected core counties included in this request that met the required snow and public assistance thresholds are as follows: Albemarle, Arlington, Caroline, Clarke, Culpeper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Frederick, Highland, King George, Loudoun, Louisa, Patrick, Prince William, Rappahannock, Spotsylvania, and Stafford; along with the independent cities of Alexandria, Falls Church, Manassas, Manassas Park, and Winchester.

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The affected contiguous counties included in this request that met the required snow and public assistance thresholds are as follows: Madison, Page, and Warren.

There may be add-on requests based on additional damages reported by localities, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and other state agencies.


I certify that, for this major disaster, the state and local governments will assume all applicable non-federal shares of costs required by Public Law 93-288, as amended, in accordance with *Code of Virginia* § 44-146.27. Estimated eligible costs for core and contiguous localities that met both the snow and public assistance thresholds total \$40,548,768.61. This estimated total exceeds the state PA threshold of \$11,281,443.84.

Pursuant to Sections 403 and 407 of the Stafford Act, 42 U.S.C. 5170b and 5173, as well as *Code of Virginia* § 44-146.27, the state agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the United States of America for any claims arising from the removal or debris of wreckage for this disaster. The state agrees the debris removal from public and private property will not occur until the landowner signs an unconditional authorization for the removal of debris.

Attached please find the required enclosures. Enclosure B includes the cost estimate for each locality by category and the percentage of the total eligible PA cost estimate. Enclosure D includes the snowfall data reported by the National Weather Service and historical record snowfall data from NCDC. Significant impacts were experienced concurrently across every region of the state from January 22, 2016, to January 24, 2016.

I have designated VDEM State Coordinator Jeffrey Stern as the State Coordinating Officer for this request.

Sincerely,



Terence R. McAuliffe

TRM/JDS

Enclosures

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Attachment A: OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13 (3/13)

Enclosure B: Public Assistance

Enclosure D: Historic and Current Snowfall Data